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Office of University
Communications

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Tanner Burch '15 Pursues Career in Athletic Performance Training

Tanner Burch, a 2015 graduate of Gardner-Webb University and football standout, is back at GWU to pursue a Master of Arts in Sport Education. A

Tanner Burch in the gym

graduate assistant strength and conditioning coach, he works with GWU football, softball, men's tennis, women's tennis, cheer, and assists with wrestling.

A native of Savannah, Ga., Burch knows firsthand the importance of strength training. His senior year in high school, he played 16 games with a shoulder injury. Although he was overlooked by other college football teams, Gardner-Webb offered him a football scholarship. "Travis Cunningham (GWU assistant football coach) made a huge impact on me," Burch affirmed. "Because of the relationship we formed in the recruiting process and how much he impressed me, I decided to attend to Gardner-Webb."

Burch wasn't sure of his major when he arrived on campus in 2011. As he began to work with the football trainers, he was fascinated by their jobs. "I had a very good relationship with the strength and conditioning coaches and thought what they were doing was awesome," Burch asserted. "I began to ask questions about the profession and knew that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to guide athletes in the right direction to not only increase athletic performance but keep them healthy, as well. Around the same time, Gardner-Webb announced it was offering the Exercise Science Program for the following semester."

Tanner Burch

He declared his major and started learning the dynamics of human movement in kinesiology and locating muscles in the body. "My classes gave me a good baseline to help me understand the science behind what is going on during training with athletes," Burch described. "The internships they allowed me to do at Georgia (Athens, Ga.) and Georgia Tech (Atlanta, Ga.) gave me the hands-on experience for application and the practicality of training methods."

As he works with GWU athletes, Burch is reminded how the exercise science faculty, Dr. Jeff Hartman and Dr. David Granniss, encouraged him to explore topics related to his goals. "We had many interesting conversations that enabled me to expand my learning

experience,” he observed. “They were also flexible on the criteria so that it pertained specifically to my career, which gave me an edge over most undergraduate students trying to go the route I was going.”

Outside of his major area of study, Burch benefited from a sports psychology class he took as an elective. “Psychology is a neglected aspect in athletics, and it is something I have integrated in my programs, and my athletes have benefited tremendously,” he asserted. “I think the better you can understand your athlete’s personality and where he comes from, the more effectively you can motivate him.”

Besides being prepared for his coaching duties, Burch also appreciates the GWU community and the friends he met who are still a part of his life. “I created a lot of memories at Gardner-Webb that I value very much,” Burch reflected. “You’re in a close-knit community, where everyone knows your face and most likely your name. It also provides an opportunity to get more one-on-one education from your professors.”